ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

JOHN LAFORGE

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MADISON, WISCONSIN

INTERVIEWED BY MARY EBELING

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ABSTRACT

John LaForge became involved in the nuclear protest movement during the late 1970s while finishing his undergraduate work in Minnesota. At the time of this interview, Mr. LaForge was co-director of Nukewatch, an organization dedicated to the abolition of nuclear weapons. He has worked as the editor of the organization's quarterly newsletter, *Nukewatch Pathfinder,* as well as assisting with the writing and editing of several books concerning nuclear protests.

EDITORIAL NOTICE

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INFORMANT: JOHN LAFORGE, Co-director of Nukewatch
INTERVIEWER: MARY EBELING, Mead & Hunt
DATE: 3 January 2003

[Beginning of side one, tape one]
[Interview begins]

MARY EBELING: This is Mary Ebeling, historian with Mead & Hunt in Madison, Wisconsin. I'm conducting an interview on the 3rd of January, 2003 with John LaForge. We are conducting this interview at Mead & Hunt's offices in Madison. John, what is your relationship to Nukewatch?

JOHN LAFORGE: I'm currently a co-director there.

EBELING: And my understanding is that Nukewatch is the educational arm of the Progressive Foundation . . .

LAFORGE: That's right.

EBELING: . . . and I was wondering if you could provide an introduction to the events that led up to the development of Nukewatch as an organization?

LAFORGE: Oh, sure. The late Sam Day was managing editor of the *Progressive Magazine* in 1979 when the U.S. Government enjoined the magazine to prevent publication of an article about the hydrogen bomb. And a lawsuit ensued where the magazine was working to publish this article in spite of this injunction from the government which would have prevented a publication. The government was arguing that information in the article was secret. The author, Howard Moorland, argued that all of his information about how an H-bomb works and how it's built was attainable in the public realm with public documentation. So there were lawyers that gathered and there was fund appeal and there was the nonprofit group Progressive Foundation established then to pay the lawyers to fight off the government censorship. In the middle of the lawsuit two newspapers in Madison published the article on their own and so it kind of took the wind out of the government sails and they gave up their case against the magazine which then published the article. After that court victory, magazine triumph over the censorship as Sam would say, he sort of split off from the magazine and started Nukewatch as a function or project of the Progressive Foundation which is now separate from the magazine.

EBELING: Okay. And that's another question I'm wondering about, is how has the relationship between Nukewatch and the Progressive Foundation evolved over the years? Is it the same as it was originally or has the relationship changed in anyway?

LAFORGE: It's changed a little bit in that, as I said, we're not associated with the magazine or the lawsuit anymore. It's completely independent and functions almost entirely as an educational and nonviolent direct action group focusing on nuclear weapons, radioactive waste, nuclear power and other issues resulting from the development of nuclear weapons.

EBELING: So was that independence from the Progressive, I'm just trying to establish the nature of the relationship, was that independence, did that happen at a later date than the actual founding of Nukewatch or was that actually right from the start?

LAFORGE: From the start the Progressive Foundation was independent. It was an organization devoted strictly to fighting government censorship regarding nuclear weapons and so it was associated but never tied directly with the magazine. It was a group of attorneys and activists who worked to defend that magazine's right to publish what it intended to.

EBELING: Okay. I think I'm clear on that now. Other than Sam Day were there any other founding members of Nukewatch?

LAFORGE: Oh, yes, I'm sorry I can't think of their names right now. But there were, as I said, a couple of lawyers, some college professors from the University of Minnesota and some lay activists.

EBELING: Okay. Sam seems to be the figure that looms, you know, largest in the history. I'm also wondering how you personally became involved in the anti-nuclear movement and what lead you to Nukewatch particularly?

LAFORGE: In the last year of my undergraduate work in Minnesota was 1979 when the Three-Mile Island accident contaminated Pennsylvania and at the same time President Jimmy Carter reinstated draft registration as some sort of a bully pulpit maneuver to show that he was being tough in the military sense as opposed to Ronald Reagan who was running against him and claiming that Carter was soft on the military. And then Reagan's election as it was kind of propelled me into anti-nuclear work. Before that I was focused mainly on environmental activism in college. So it was Carter's get tough attitude, his leak of Presidential Directive 59 which is pretty famous now too. It's the Carter doctrine of winnable or first strike nuclear weapons deployment which was, again, designed, the leak designed to counter Reagan's claim that Carter was weak on defense. And then with Reagan's election and appointment of Casper Weinberger as Secretary of Defense and Alexander Haig as Secretary of State these three military hawks, you know, talked a lot about using nuclear weapons against the cities of the Soviet Union, the former Soviet Union, and the. . . all of it seemed positively crazy and insane, suicidal to me. And that helped galvanize me into working against nuclear weapons in particular. And I had known about Nukewatch because of the *Progressive Magazine* case which

was pretty notorious around country. It was one of the very rare instances where the government tried to prevent publication of an article. And the demonstrations that Nukewatch was organizing in the Madison area was similar to those that I'd been participating in in Strategic Air Command in Omaha the headquarters and control center for all the nuclear weapons in the country. So we got to know one another and in the early 80's worked on several demonstrations either help in organizing things together or publicizing the events afterwards.

EBELING: Okay. Approximately how much time do you spend on projects with Nukewatch it's sort of, you know, from discussions we've had that it's fairly, you know, involving and I'm wondering if you could walk us through some of your typical work that you would do on a daily basis for Nukewatch?

LAFORGE: Well the size of the organization has changed a little or evolved over the last twenty years. Right now there are three full time staff people that work in our office in rural Luck, Wisconsin. There've been up to five staff people in the mid 80's when the organization was as big as it ever was, offices in Madison, the work has involved research and writing about nuclear weapons and now the last ten years or so radioactive waste and nuclear power as well. And publication of a quarterly newsletter, our *Nukewatch Pathfinder*, which also involves a lot of research and writing. We've published five books over the course of the twenty years as well and produced two slide shows, one on the missile silos and one on what we call the deadly peaceful atom or radioactive waste resulting from the arms race in nuclear power production. And then there is outreach to other peace groups and like minded people when we organize demonstrations at nuclear weapons facilities.

EBELING: So it sounds like you basically work full-time for Nukewatch?

LAFORGE: Yes.

EBELING: Okay.

LAFORGE: I'm the editor of the paper, the Pathfinder, as well as the number two staff person. Bonnie Urfer is our senior staff and co-director and Molly Mechtenberg is our newest staff member, she just joined us about a year ago.

EBELING: Okay. I'm also curious about the demographic make up of Nukewatch's membership? I mean, it started in Madison, is it mostly people from Wisconsin or have you really been able to draw a constituency from around the country and possibly the world?

LAFORGE: About half of the constituency, as you say, is from Wisconsin the mailing list is now 2,700 and 250 of those are organizations the rest are individuals half of whom are in Wisconsin the other half heavily on the two coasts, California and the east coast. And there are about 200 individuals who are subscribers in Europe and Canada and a few stragglers outside of those areas to India and Cuba and Ukraine and China.

EBELING: Interesting.

LAFORGE: Yes.

EBELING: Okay. I guess maybe we should shift to the missile silo campaign at this point. And the missile silo campaign and the mapping and the resulting book, *Nuclear Heartland*, was a really high profile sort of consciousness raising program and I was wondering if you could describe how the project came about? How did . . . who thought of this, you know, brilliant idea?

LAFORGE: Well, it was definitely the idea of our, the founder and mastermind, Samuel H. Day, Jr., our friend Sam, who just died two years ago, to, you know, bring to light the fact that nuclear weapons systems were right in people's backyards all over the great plains states. And at the time it was something that was practically unknown around the country and even people living in the missile fields themselves were found by us to not even know that missiles were right in their area unless they had been long-term residents who watched the mechanics of these giant holes being dug and the systems installed. If they came after that period of time it was quite easy to not even realize that they were there because what's above ground at these places is rather innocuous it looks, some of them look like transformer systems for utilities or just a bunch of pole barn buildings that could be used for anything and easily mistaken for farm sheds or equipment sheds. So the idea was to highlight not just the movement of nuclear weapons to these facilities, but the fact that these launch pads were dotted all over the great plains and that people could go right up to them and see for themselves what nuclear weapon systems were all about.

EBELING: That actually kind of leads me to a couple of other questions, do you have any theories on why all of these people didn't know, I mean, was the government not talking about it or were the people living there not discussing it with the younger generations as they were growing up? Just any thoughts on why people seemed to not be aware of what they had in their backyard?

LAFORGE: Well, that's not unusual to say North Dakota or Wyoming or Montana, you know, people don't generally know the native trees or grasses in their own neck of the woods so it really isn't surprising is it that unless they're associated with Air Force or the military base in the area that wouldn't know what's buried out in the fields. It looks like a cornfield to them and in fact these things weren't discussed very often by people. We were quite a surprise to waitresses

and truck stop patrons when we pointed out why we were out in the field doing the research. They said oh, gee I didn't know we had so many or if they did know they'd say, well at least we're going to be the first to go if there's a war because we're going to be, you know, targeted with the missiles from the former Soviet Union. So there was either ignorance or apathy on one hand or just some rather bleak fatalism on the other.

EBELING: Okay. I wonder, too, if the fact, because I know you guys also conducted Truck Watch, monitoring the transport of these missiles to the sites, and my understanding is that that was done at night when they wouldn't be as noticeable?

LAFORGE: Much of it was done at night, but not necessarily all of it and not deliberately at night. It just happened that the schedule involved driving at night quite a bit. What we tried to focus on was the transport of the warheads themselves which would be coming from the final assembly in Pantex in the panhandle of Texas and then spreading out to Missouri, North and South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, and Nebraska. And, again, these trucks that carried these warheads and still do today for the project of rehabilitating and upgrading the Minuteman missiles look rather like other semi tractor trailers. There are some distinguishing characteristics that you get to know of after you watch for them long enough, but they are designed to sort of blend in with the rest of the heavy truck traffic on the interstate system.

EBELING: I'm just curious, what are the distinguishing characteristics?

LAFORGE: There's a double antenna on the top and it's always a distinctive antenna system, too.

EBELING: Okay.

LAFORGE: There's a couple of other things, too. If I can find a picture of one, it's in the book isn't it?

EBELING: I'm not sure what page it's on.

LAFORGE: I thought there was one here.

EBELING: I'm not finding it. Is it that truck there?

LAFORGE: Yeah, this is one of the trucks. You can see the white antenna on the front which is a design that's a rectangle, it's very unusual.

EBELING: Yeah.

LAFORGE: It's that telltale mark of it.

EBELING: Pretty space age.

LAFORGE: SST as they're called. Safe Secure Transport is what the Air Force calls them. When they skid off the road they're not so safe and secure. We've got records of some instances of that in North Dakota in the icy winter times.

EBELING: Oh I'm sure. So back to the missile silos that these warheads were in-their transport devices-were being placed in, what type of assistance did you have in locating the silos, when you were going around trying to map them?

LAFORGE: We've got . . . well to begin with there were county maps from the local seats that indicated where the silos were in a rough sort of way, and we were able to get duplicate copies of those. And then at that time because of all the talk from the White House and the Pentagon in those days of fighting and surviving a nuclear war there were a lot of people in the missile silo fields themselves who were interested in ending the missile silo era and getting rid of these missiles. So we all thought of this project as a way of highlighting how dangerous these things were, how close they were to regular residential areas and ultimately as a means of raising enough criticism of them to get rid of them. There was always a local peace group or local church or individuals with, some of them with missile silos right on their own farms or ranches who would be eager to help us locate and get the correct directions out to these places. Some were school teachers, there were a lot of ministers, ordinary ranchers often times and then students as well, students from some of the college campuses in the missile field cities.

EBELING: So you did find then that there was a fair amount of sort of local awareness about the nuclear program, you know, at the time that you guys were going out and doing the mapping and I'm wondering if you also had occasion or opportunity to work with local groups such as the Missile Landowner's Association or groups of ranchers or was it, did it tend to be more individuals that you were working with?

LAFORGE: I don't think we worked with the landowner's association per se. There were individual landowners who had reluctantly given up their land under Air Force commandeering or eminent domain claims so they were somehow, they somehow got in touch with us or vice versa having known about our work out there. But no I'm sure we didn't work with the landowner's association. The effort did happen over the course of several years where more and more people became aware of the project. Barb and I weren't actually in on the project until quite late in it after the initial charting of the locations had already been done by volunteers. In '87 Barb and I were hired by Nukewatch to double check the directions that had been put together by these volunteers and they weren't necessarily consistent one field to the next. And so the group in Madison wanted us to make all the directions uniform. So we ended up

traveling to all 1,000 missile sites and all 100 launch control centers over the course of three months and drove about 30,000 miles. By then, you know, Nukewatch had already established relationships with these peace groups and churches throughout the area who then invited us to stay over while we were doing the research.

EBELING: Okay. So these people also put you up then?

LAFORGE: Yes.

EBELING: And took care of you basically while you were out there doing the research?

LAFORGE: Yes.

EBELING: Good. While we're talking about those sort of local resistance I'm thinking about, I can't find the page in *Nuclear Heartland*, the rancher who was at the end of the runway, was it at Ellsworth?

LAFORGE: Yes.

EBELING: That, what did he do, he painted?

LAFORGE: Painted large stones white, yes, and set them in two big formations at the end of the runway which was on his ranch. One in the form of a peace sign the other in the famous earth symbol so that when the bombers came in for a landing they always had to take a look at his peace sign. He's still there I believe.

EBELING: Do you remember his name?

LAFORGE: I'll think of it.

EBELING: I mean, I can hopefully find it in here and look it up.

LAFORGE: I can't think of it right now. He also hosted, he and his family hosted the huge gatherings that happened out there in the '80's to protect the Black Hills which were, I can't think of the name of those guys now either.

EBELING: So were the Black Hills being threatened at that point by additional military development?

LAFORGE: They were being threatened with development for mines primarily.

EBELING: Okay. Were there any other national or international groups that kind of joined in your effort to map these silos or was it Nukewatch working in tandem with

the local organizations that helped them out as they traveled through the various states?

LAFORGE: We never found nations that had helped fund the project, they're listed in the front of the book in the introduction, but I don't think there were, you know, there were individual members of other national organizations that did help throughout the area like the Fellowship of Reconciliation had some of their members help and volunteer in the early mapping. That's a 110 year old peace group in the United States, I think it's the oldest one. I can't think of other international groups that were helping.

EBELING: Okay. I'm wondering after the missile silo campaign and the mapping and the *Nuclear Heartland* came out and also during that time there were a number of direct actions and drawing attention and protesting the nuclear buildup in the United States. I'm wondering if there were any direct actions that you can recall in South Dakota at Delta-09 which is the launch facility that we're studying, I think it was dubbed Cassandra's Missile, during the mapping project or at Delta-01 which was the launch control facility which was Mike and Beth's Launch Control. Yes, we should talk about that in a second, the naming, but I'm wondering if you recall if there was anything in particular that occurred at those two locations during the time you were working on this?

LAFORGE: I'm the wrong person to ask about those two particular sites because after the project was done our group focused on the Grand Forks missile field and did several actions to missile silos there. So I really don't know if D-09 and D-01 had demonstrations, but Jay Davis would be the person to speak with about that, somebody who organized and participated in a lot of demonstrations at the South Dakota silos. I think he's in Rapid City or near there.

EBELING: Is he with any particular group or anything or is he?

LAFORGE: He's a long time Nukewatch volunteer. I don't know if he's with other groups too.

EBELING: You wouldn't be able to tell me after the interview how to get in touch with him?

LAFORGE: Yeah, I sure can.

EBELING: Okay. Great.

LAFORGE: And Mike and Beth I happen to know are Mike Sprong and Beth Preheim, a married couple who still live in South Dakota and have been lifelong peace activists and helped do a lot of the mapping and organizing back then too.

EBELING: Okay. I'm not really quite sure how these facilities were named by the Nukewatch folks. Some of them have names that really jump out at you like Mordor and I think we discussed briefly earlier the Cassandra name for Delta-09 you had something about it being a mythological figure, you thought, and I think you might be right.

LAFORGE: Yeah, I'm not sure if I'm right about that, but I think Cassandra was the mythic figure of someone who lives in denial and sees the worst things through rose colored glasses. Which is how we came to view quite a few of the communities we came across in the missile fields that paid no attention or seemed to have no waking consciousness of the missile silos themselves. And the names there really is no rhyme or reason to the names. The people who initially found them in the volunteer stage of the mapping project got the honor of naming the silos. Barb and I changed some of the names when they were, with the editor, Sam Day's, approval and we thought a different name would be more appropriate.

EBELING: Do you remember which ones any of those were?

LAFORGE: Well sometimes a reference was so obscure that we wanted to make it more down to earth. Here's one called Timothy Leary Missile which might have meaning to some people. Here's a whole flight, a group of ten missiles is called a flight by the Air Force, I don't know why, and here's a whole flight named after birds. Here's another whole flight named after the Iran Contra scandal figures. Most of them are named after places, places in close proximity to the missile itself, like Fox Elder Creek Missile or Salt Creek Pines Missile in Montana. But sometimes we choose some rather stark or more descriptive epithets you might say. Extreme Prejudice Missile, now there's a phrase from the movie Apocalypse Now where someone is dispatched on a mission of assassination which you might say is the purpose of the missiles themselves too. Here's one called Hate Filled Missile which takes the shine off of these heavily highly engineered things.

EBELING: Almost like the naming, because there were different groups of volunteers working on different flights with the naming seems to show some of their personalities as well.

LAFORGE: Yeah.

EBELING: So you're not really quite sure about any actions at D-09 or D-01, I wondering if you have any recollections of actions in South Dakota in general or would that?

LAFORGE: Again, Jay Davis is the person to speak with. I know we've reported on the South Dakota actions in the Nukewatch Newsletter but that was before my installation as editor and Jay has kept a real solid chronology and history of the events out there having been a key organizer. As far as South Dakota goes you

might say South Dakota, Missouri and North Dakota saw the most demonstrations of any of the missile fields. Minot, North Dakota has seen very little. Carl Kabat, I think, is the only person to go onto a silo in a protest in the Minot field, but the other three areas saw dozens of protests and interestingly enough those are the three fields that have been removed subsequently. So we like to take complete credit for that.

EBELING: Of course.

LAFORGE: Not that there's any connection at all.

EBELING: You were, however, involved in some specific actions out at missile silo sites as a result of your effort there. I'm wondering if there's any that you found particularly notable or striking and would describe for us?

LAFORGE: Yeah, there have been several very dramatic actions at missile silos, indeed the first one ever was probably the most dramatic and it sort of threw the doors open to everything that came afterward. The Silo Pruning Hooks in November, Armistice Day in November of 1984, involved four people who took a compressor driven jackhammer to a silo in Missouri and did damage to the gigantic concrete lid that covers up the top of the silo. They were Helen Woodson, Carl and Paul Kabat both brothers and both Catholic priests and Larry Cloud Morgan. The four of them were tried in Kansas City, Missouri on charges of destruction of federal property, sabotage and a lower charge of trespass, I believe. And because of the circumstances of their actions the judge they happened to draw the political atmosphere at the time they ended up getting the harshest sentences ever meted out to civil disobedience in the history of the United States. The were initially given an eighteen year sentence by a Judge D. Brook Bartlett. Those sentences were later reduced on appeal to twelve, ten, and eight years. And because of the notoriety of their action they brought a lot of attention to the missile silos and to the question of the legality of the weapons. You know, ever since Colorado lawyer Bill Durland starting arguing about illegal status of nuclear weapons there've been protests at these places based on the legal argument that binding international and domestic law forbids the use of these weapon systems. The Nuremberg Charter and the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Regulations of war on land make it illegal to plan and prepare indiscriminate war. So these arguments were brought to the trial in Kansas as a rationale known as an affirmative defense which is to say, yes we trespassed and yes we did damage to the system, but it's, it's not a crime because what we did was in furtherance of crime prevention, that is our minor offense was done to prevent a greater harm and that argument has been brought to bear at at least half a dozen missile silo actions that are subsequent to that one in 1984. There was another Missouri action that involved Jean and Joe Gump, grandparents from Michigan, in 1985, I believe, also Father Larry Moorland was part of that action and the CBS *60 Minutes* television crew was on the scene to record their entry into the site. In fact, the whole CBS crew

was arrested along with the protesters that day and held in jail until they posted a big bail. That action was well publicized too in part because Jean and Joe Gump were such ordinary mom and pop types with twelve of their own children and grandparents at the time that they did this demonstration. Other actions that have taken place at silos have involved varying degrees of damage to the site which has always been a symbolic sort of damage and based on the biblical prophesy that's written up in the Old Testament Isaiah's prophecy the beating swords into Plowshares so that's why these demonstrations have been dubbed Plowshares actions. The ones involving a symbolic damage to the missile silos and other nuclear weapons facilities have been called Plowshares actions and there have been actions involving less risk no damage whatever at the silos. I, myself, have participated in several of those in the North Dakota area in the Grand Forks missile field before that missile field was demolished as well. In the '80's after Barb and I finished this work we focused for quite a number of years on the Grand Forks Air Force Base and the missile field attached to it where 150 Minuteman III's used to be kept on hair trigger alert status. And we had many demonstrations at the air base itself where we simply blocked the road or held banners during one of their open houses so thousands of the visitors there would see our banners and be reminded that the place isn't just a carnival ride it's actually preparations for nuclear war, nuclear winter mass extermination. The missile silo actions we conducted were, I think, three all together. One involved a sit down in front of a launch control center in Steele County, North Dakota and we were convicted of trespass there and sentenced to a simple five days in jail or something. Another time we brought blood to a missile silo and poured blood all over the thing as a symbol of the wasted lives that go into maintenance and threatened use of these weapons as well as the lives lost through poverty and starvation when money is spent on weapons instead of health care and human needs. And that demonstration involved a Canadian citizen, a student from Winnipeg, and I think because we had a Canadian with us the charges were dropped the day before trial and we never were able to argue our case at trial or see what the consequences were going to be. Another reason that case might have been dropped was that we found a statute in the North Dakota statute books that allows for the prevention of a public offense or interference with a public offense which was a statutory way of saying crime prevention is a legitimate excuse for breaking a minor law and we were going to make full use of that statute at trial and it could be that the federal government didn't want to see that argument publicized or any attention brought to the question of the legality or the illegality of these weapons systems. That's an argument that still needs to be made, I guess. There's a long answer for you.

EBELING: It's a good answer. I think I had read one of the articles posted on your website that one of your stances is that these are in violations of treaties, am I?

LAFORGE: Yeah, that's right.

EBELING: Okay.

LAFORGE: The Geneva Conventions in particular and the Hague Regulations which are laws of war even older than the Geneva Conventions both forbid attacks on civilians or civilian objects for any reason. They also forbid retaliation against civilians for any reason so that the, you know, the Air Force's entire rationale for the missile fields and the nuclear arsenal so called deterrents are the position that if we're attacked we can respond in kind is illegal under these treaties that the U.S. is a party to. In fact the Geneva Conventions are written right into the Air Force Manual of International Law which we have obtained through the offices of the Senator Conrad from North Dakota. The Air Force acknowledges that the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Regulations are binding on Air Force personnel not just civilian leadership in the White House and the Pentagon but Air Force personnel per se. So whenever we did one of these demonstrations we'd bring with us, I brought you a copy too, a copy of our so called caution and appeal to the military personnel warning them of their, you know, legal responsibility to refuse participation in planning and preparation for indiscriminate warfare. That's the language of the Nuremberg Charter. In the Nuremberg Principles and the Nuremberg Tribunal were established after World War II to prevent a repetition of what happened in Germany, that is the deliberate attempt to annihilate whole populations and the U.S. was principally influential in establishing the Nuremberg Tribunal and in fact the lead prosecutor was U.S. Supreme Court Justice Jackson. And so we put a lot of stock in the Nuremberg Charter in conjunction with the Geneva Conventions when arguing that these weapons are an ongoing criminal conspiracy to commit war crimes. That's strong language, but if you consider the effects of nuclear weapons which has been done by scholars from all over the world and the fact that you can't limit or control the effects of nuclear weapons in any way then you're left inescapably with the conclusion that these weapons are indiscriminate and that they are going to kill civilians regardless of your attempt to target them on military sites. As a result of that understanding the military and the military personnel themselves are, in our estimation, obligated not to cooperate or participate with maintenance and threatened use of these machines, because it involves them in illegal war preparations. Likewise the Nuremberg Principles were applied to civilians explicitly, even the ordinary civilians not just industrialists but especially them, and mandated that people in Germany practice civil disobedience before going along with the illegal orders of this German state.

[Beginning of side two, tape one]

EBELING: We were talking about that notice that you provided to military personnel when you went to a missile silo site, I can see that it's pretty lengthy.

LAFORGE: Yeah.

EBELING: I was wondering if there were a couple like highlights or key points that you could read for the interview?

LAFORGE: Okay. Yeah, most statute books have two or three pages explaining affirmative defenses which is to say a fire fighter isn't going to be charged with breaking and entering if they break down a door or smash windows to save people inside. The affirmative defense in that case is that the fire fighter was working to prevent harm to individuals and the harm he or she committed was minor compared to that which was being prevented. In North Dakota that statute says any person in aid or defense of a person about to be injured by a public offense may make resistance sufficient to prevent the offense. And so we acted on, I think January 7, 1990, based on that and these other principles. The U.S. Constitution that Article Six says that all treaties made shall be the supreme law of the land that every judge in every state shall be bound thereby and that anything in the Constitution to the contrary you can ignore. So then you have to look at these treaties that are made and affirmed by the U.S. Senate and they include the Geneva Conventions, the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice, the Army Field Manual, the U.S. Law of Naval Warfare and, the book I mentioned earlier, Air Force International Law Conduct of Arm to Conflict in Air Operations. And then the Geneva Conventions themselves, as I said, prohibit warfare directed at civilians or civil objects and our argument is that you can't use nuclear weapons without directing them at civilians, the Air Force and the Navy of course even the Army with its so called tactical or close range nuclear weapons will say that they're going to target a military site only, but because of radioactive fallout there's no way to limit the affects of nuclear weapons, particularly the radiation and the firestorms that spread out from the epicenter. So since nuclear weapons are going to indiscriminately kill civilians you have to consider the Hague Convention which says here, especially prohibits the employment of poison or poisoned arms, the killing or wounding treacherously of individuals belonging to a hostile nation or army or the employment of arms, projectiles or materials of nature to cause superfluous injury. Since radiation affects the gene pool, causes cancer, lymphomas and leukemias it's no stretch to call nuclear weapons poison or poison arms. In fact, General George Lee Butler, former head of the Strategic Arm Command, has said himself that these nuclear weapons that he was once in charge of are biological time bombs and it's no exaggeration to say that nuclear weapons are biological weapons because they damage the genes of the people exposed to the fallout. And now the Geneva Gas Protocol which was adopted in 1925 and ratified by the U.S. Senate in 1949 prohibits the use not just of gas but of all analogous liquids, materials and devices. Now that's a phrase directly from the protocol which in our estimation encompasses the affects of nuclear weapons. There's also a convention on the prevention and punishment of genocide and the Nuremberg Principles, that I mentioned before, which really are ultimately the Nuremberg Tribunal Judgment is what cinches or closes the argument. Because the Nuremberg Principles were applied to ordinary German citizens by the U.S. prosecutors who said, and this is a quote, "international as such binds

every citizen just as does ordinary municipal law. Acts when adjudged criminal when done by an officer of the government are criminal when done by a private individual." The fact that a person acts pursuant to the order of his government, that's a quote, you know, say stop protesting this nuclear weapon there's an order of the government, you know. The fact that you act pursuant to the order of the government or your superior does not relieve you from responsibility under international law provided a moral choice was in fact possible. So there's the dilemma we're stuck with when we know that these weapons are in existence and that we have a moral choice in our own lives whether or not to protest against their existence, deployment and threatened use. Then we have this terrible choice to make whether to ignore our responsibility or not really.

EBELING: I was actually going to ask about this a little bit later but it seems pretty topical right now, it's at least obvious to me, my interpretation, when I read through things like *Nuclear Heartland* and then listening to you talk, that there seems to be a fairly strong or involved component of religious organizations or religious component in the resistance movement. And we talked, I think, already in a fair amount of detail about the types of organizations and the religious groups that were involved, but I'm wondering if you can maybe expand on it a little bit if you have any thoughts moral end or spiritual component that revolves around this obligation as you say to protest and take a stand against these things. I'm thinking about it's not just the missile pruning hook damage, there's the Easter lily that was placed on a South Dakota silo, prayer services, vigils that were held and those seem to loom large in the history of the protest. Am I right in that and is there anything you think should be expanded on?

LAFORGE: Oh, you're right about that, yeah. Most of the major churches and church organizations issued serious condemnations of nuclear weapons and deterrence theory in the 1980's. And that helped motivate their congregations all over the country and in Canada. I think in particular of a demonstration we had in Grand Forks, North Dakota where one hundred Mennonites came down from Winnipeg and we completely, there's a photograph of it, completely encircled one of the missile silos holding hands and that organized in large part by the Mennonite church in Winnipeg, that's just one example. As you say there's a couple of approaches personally I'm taken by the legal argument that so clearly places these weapons outside the realm of legitimacy. They almost are in a category with other contraband like cocaine or assault rifles, you know, which nobody is supposed to be allowed to have. But that's just one argument. There's an entirely moral or religious perspective that was outlined by the, well as I said, all the major denominations during the 1980's with their statements regarding nuclear weapons and which found, you know, the arsenals have been reduced in size since then but they're still large enough to bring down nuclear winter on the Earth and end life as we know it. Back then the two superpowers had up to 60,000 warheads deployed against one another and all the churches understood that this was sort of a suicidal position since a small

fraction of that number could have destroyed either sides major cities. So it wasn't a big moral leap for these churches to come out against this it was just strictly a look at the New Testament in the case of the Christian churches and statements of all the founders of the other major religions regarding how to treat one another which moved these organizations to condemn plans and preparations for nuclear war. So the book and in our scrapbook that we collected produced as a result of the work are full of pictures of demonstrations conducted by church groups and people motivated by a religious and moral principles primarily against killing. In the case of fundamental Christian ethics, but against indiscriminate warfare in particular generally because there isn't a major religion in the world that endorses indiscriminate warfare. Even the religions that somehow are able to endorse modern war based on this archaic just war theory aren't able to come up with a rationale that would justify nuclear weapons use because their affects are so indiscriminate.

EBELING: What kind of response did you encounter when you were involved in these protests at the missile sites? I'm thinking specifically first, this is obviously a multi-part question as most of them are, first by the military or local police forces. I understand that a lot of people were arrested at part of these, but what was the general tenor of the protest, were they normally allowed to occur and then people were arrested, was there intervention right away?

LAFORGE: The single biggest demonstration I think took place in '88 where ten different missile silos were occupied at the same time, simultaneously, with groups of two or three up to five people.

EBELING: Was that in Missouri?

LAFORGE: Yes, and my co-director, Bonnie Urfer, at Nukewatch and Sam Day were the key organizers there along with activists in Missouri. You know I wasn't there for that action so it's hard to say exactly what the local response was. I know from my own experience in North Dakota there was a serious curiosity about all of us so called outsiders who would come from Minnesota into the North Dakota area and do these protests which we took exception to because so many of our coworkers and colleagues were from North Dakota. The newspapers, if they're any indication of community response, usually ran letters on the . . . letters to the editor section that were balanced, you know, pro and con, people writing in favor or in support of our demonstrations and others called for us to be pilloried. I'm not sure, the question is hard to answer because a lot of times we don't get a good view of the local response coming in from an outlying area for a demonstration, held a couple of nights in jail, then go home and then come back for trial. We only run into a small segment of the public, but the events never fail to galvanize, you know, opinion one way or another at least as it was expressed in the newspapers. As far as how long it took for authorities to respond, the missile silos are unguarded and they're extremely remote. We ran into teenagers or people in their early twenties who

said that as teenagers they used to just tease the Air Force all the time by going out at night to one or two of these silos and rattling the fence then driving away and hiding in the ditch and watching and waiting until the guards came out to see what happened because the launch centers are usually ten to even twenty miles away from any particular silo and it takes them many minutes to get out . . . at silo actions I was a part of it always took an hour for the Air Force to respond. In the Missouri Peace Plantings the simultaneous occupation of ten silos it took about forty-five minutes for the guards to get out to people and then even then the apprehensions were always civilized and undertaken with some respect in both directions. I mean, the Air Force will come trotting up their squad of guards with their weapons drawn and what not, but the people in charge generally understood that we weren't a threat to them and they weren't terribly trigger happy. Many times the young guards who did have their hands on the M-16's were very nervous. Who knows what they were told about us or what to prepare for. Of course they're told to prepare for the worst, obviously. So often times they would be just literally shaking in their boots as they put the handcuffs on us or whatever and it would be a matter of us trying to calm them down just by talking with them. And once while I was in custody our protest was on a Martin Luther King Birthday, this was before it was made a national holiday, and we all had Dr. King buttons on and I was in the Air Force squad in the back with the cuffs behind my back and one of the MP's asked me if he could have the button and I just thought that was a nice breakthrough at the time because everybody wanted to celebrate Dr. King no matter what side of the fence you're on with nuclear weapons.

EBELING: Did you give him the button?

LAFORGE: Oh, yeah, he reached in and grabbed it.

EBELING: That's great. So were there any, it sounds like, you know, relations between the military/police at these sites were, you know, relatively respectful.

LAFORGE: Yeah.

EBELING: But were there any individuals in Nukewatch or any of the protests that you attended or know about that law enforcement did decide to focus on for some reason? Was the group treated more, it was a group and nobody was singled out for specific attention by the military or law enforcement?

LAFORGE: As far as I know we were always just treated as a group, yeah.

EBELING: That's good.

LAFORGE: Yeah.

EBELING: And I'm also curious with the community of military responses, we're getting a little mixed up here, but I'm wondering if, you know, you said there some kind, sounds like somewhat vitriolic treatment of the press occasionally.

LAFORGE: Yeah.

EBELING: And I've seen some of the headlines in the articles that you've brought with you. Were you ever accused of, you or your actions accused of being unpatriotic or not American in some way?

LAFORGE: That reminds me, yeah, when the book was first published and had gotten a bit of publicity being reviewed in the *L.A. Times* and of course the South Dakota paper it happened when the South Dakota paper reviewed and Casper Weinberger happened to be out at the Ellsworth Air Force Base and as Secretary of Defense he's got quite a pulpit to speak from. He said, this was reported in the paper out there, I don't know why these people would want to give this information to the enemy. And we just had to laugh at that because we were pretty sure he was talking about the American public as the enemy because the Russians already knew where all these missiles are, they've got real good satellites and they had pictures of every last one of these things and the only people who really didn't have a clue as to what weapons were out there was the people in this country so he was trying to call us names, obviously. And, you know, letters to the editor will always take protests that are directed against weapons systems and characterize them as anti-American as if being pro-nuclear is somehow pro-American. Whether, yeah, we've gotten pretty used to being called names by people who or organizations that say either have some connection with the military or stand to benefit from its largess or people who never saw a weapon they didn't like or somehow associated weaponry and militarism with patriotism something that we have a big problem with. Obviously, in our estimation patriotism has more to do with belief in the principles of open government and participatory democracy then secret weapons systems developed in giant corporate laboratories without any government oversight and then subsequent pollution of the environment from the development of nuclear weapons which has now become so notorious that the government has to pay compensation to the people in the factories who contracted cancer. I think it's, it's always going to be a dialog between opponents of militarism and proponents of it as to who's being patriotic, that seems to come with the territory.

EBELING: So these criticisms didn't or did they make members of Nukewatch, you know, feel. Maybe I should rephrase that. How did the individual members of Nukewatch respond to these types of criticisms? Was it?

LAFORGE: Well, sometimes we'd respond with a counterpoint in the newspaper, respond to a specific letter writer, but most of the time, you know, we can't spend our time trying to counter all the criticism because it's sort of relentless and we'd

like to focus instead on creative and innovative ways of drawing attention to what we think is wrong with the weapons systems. So we didn't spend a lot of time or energy responding to some of the more vitriolic condemnations of this work. You know, this idea that Sam Day had was that if more people knew about nuclear weapons and what they're necessary consequences are then the sooner we'll get rid of them because they're so objectionable and I think Sam Day's completely right about that. It's still a matter of fact that not very many people know about nuclear weapons or what environmental and even the ethical or spiritual consequences are that have been foisted on us as a result of their deployment. And so our job is still out ahead of us, our work is undone that so many people are still unaware of what these weapons can do and what they have done. You know, Dan Berrigan who's written volumes on the subject makes an interesting argument that has motivated a lot of us for a long time and he says that possession of nuclear weapons and the threatened use of them is actually worse than nuclear war itself because at this point we can do something about it and have a moral and maybe even a legal responsibility to do so, but afterwards it's a little too late.

EBELING: Well, since we're just discussing somebody who is clearly within your own sort of activist community, what was the response within that community, the Progressive Wisconsin, your activist community nationally to your actions was it generally thought that these were good productive things or did people have different ideas about how this should be gone about?

LAFORGE: Well, production of the book was understood to be pretty noncontroversial. You know, the actions themselves are controversial, but the Atlas, a guide to the thousand missile silos, was thought of as a pretty great breakthrough and it educated a lot of people in the country. The response locally was really to put Nukewatch on the political map for a while. It had a forward written by world renowned anti-war activist Philip Berrigan who just died December 6th, and by that time, too, Sam Day, the editor, was pretty well known especially because of the Progressive article on the secret of the H-bomb, but this helped put Nukewatch on the map as a viable entity. And Madison sort of rallied around it as a focal point of a lot of attention for a time. You know, a good counter to the administration, the current administrations, then Reagan's promotion of a build up of nuclear weapons systems as opposed to a build down. I wasn't living in Madison at the time so I'm not exactly a good one to ask about the local response to it.

EBELING: So . . .

LAFORGE: Well, that generated a lot of speaking opportunities for Sam and for Barb and I having taken a big part in the research.

EBELING: Okay. You didn't really get or did you get any like substantial criticisms on the direct actions?

LAFORGE: Oh, sure. Yeah, the Plowshares actions the direct disarmament actions where people have actually damaged these machines, the hammers of hell as Dan Berrigan calls them, generated a lot of controversy because of the damage to property. The question of government property, what's legitimate protest and what's going too far is obviously raised by these demonstrations. And that debate still rages up, that was 1984 when the first silo disarmament action took place and that was four years after the very first Plowshare action and it was probably the fourth or fifth Plowshares action. Only now since then there have been seventy-nine Plowshares actions and the argument about limited property damage done in a symbolic gesture against these real weapons of mass destruction hasn't even been settled yet after all these years. After twenty-three years of Plowshares actions people still argue vehemently on both sides whether or not, number one, it's legitimate to do damage to property, and number two, this is closer to my heart, whether the severe consequences that are handed out for these actions are really worth the price that people pay. You know, prison sentences of up to eight years have been served for these kinds of actions and that can do a lot of damage to individuals or groups to lose a participant for that long a time and to have to endure that many years in the big house. So there are serious arguments on both sides. I've spoken with European activists about this because traditionally in Europe the same actions will result in far lighter sentences. I'm thinking of disarmament actions that have happened in Germany and Sweden and in Great Britain again the Pershing missile system, the Trident missile system and cruise missile systems and the people in Europe are astounded at the severity of the jail sentences handed out in the United States and so they wonder why we keep doing it here and ask, well does it build the movement to have you all in jail for so long. And so it's an ongoing debate and the question of effectiveness and the impact that these have on, not just the wider public but the individuals who participate in them.

EBELING: I'd think it could be traumatic from both the personal and an activism level.

LAFORGE: Yeah, it sure is. It's a whole way of life to place yourself in a position of taking that big of a risk involves setting up a certain way of life where you can be absent from your house and community, your apartment, your job for that long a time. You have to be devoted or committed to the object of disarmament basically before everything else.

EBELING: I know you've been in prison before for some of your actions. What's the longest you were in and, you know, it's got to be very difficult?

LAFORGE: The longest single stretch was seven and a half months. Another time I did nine months with one six month and one three month kind of back to back with only a week in between. Those are great educational experiences. Kind of like graduate work. Everybody should be exposed to it.

EBELING: Well, considering, you know, how much of your life and your organization's time has been dedicated to all of this, I'm wondering, you probably have some opinions on how successful you think the missile silo campaign, I'm going to say, was/is? You know, do you have any sort of thoughts on what has been accomplished? It's a pretty big question.

LAFORGE: Yeah. Well, the campaign's certainly educated the people who are direct participants in it to a degree that nothing else would have both with regard to the weapons themselves and the companies that contract out to maintain and improve them. Boeing, for example, does a lot of maintenance and improvement on the Minuteman silos and the Minuteman missile systems. And as far as people challenging themselves to extend themselves a little bit with regard to, you know, challenging what the government's doing in their name and how far they can go with it. The court system is a realm of experience that most people don't sink their teeth into too much except maybe by accident when they run the stop sign or drink and drive or whatever it is they end up in the court system by accident, but when you pursue a civil protest deliberately then you bring to court and to jail of a different character and eagerness to find out or to learn about it that isn't necessarily the case in ordinary circumstances. On the bigger picture it's hard to claim any triumph at all or any minor victory with regard to these missiles because the Air Force seems to be in charge of what happens regardless of public opinion. A nuclear weapon freeze movement of the late '80's did succeed in having passed Congress but it didn't stop the Pentagon and the Department of Energy from developing new nuclear weapons. So even with public opinion on our side and moving all the way through the passage of legislation in Congress the nuclear arms race proceeds as if it's got a life of its own. The current Minuteman missile silos still hold 500 missiles. They're being upgraded so they have brand new missile guidance systems installed over the last four years. They have new rocket fuel being upgraded all the time and in the case of the MX missiles those are going to be retired and they're warheads placed on the Minuteman so that the Minutemans will go from three warhead to single warhead missiles with a single warhead that's bigger than what used to be on the three warhead missiles. So it's a little bit discouraging to see that half missile silos, half the missiles themselves are gone but the attitude that says, we can threaten to burn down entire cities and we can keep this threat on hair trigger alert twenty-four hours a day hasn't changed at all. That the Air Force that the Pentagon is still willing to make this threat known and to practice it day in and day out as if nothing changed as if the Cold War is still raging with the former Soviet Union. And as if the State Department doesn't go around chiding everybody else for possessing or even threatened development of these machines.

EBELING: Is there anything that you think you could have done or should have done differently that, you know, may have created a greater impact or I'm not even sure if that's the right way to ask, but?

LAFORGE: That's hard to say. We still try to bring attention to these things. There was just another Plowshares action this past October the 6th in Colorado. Three Catholic nuns went into a silo there and they're going to be tried March 31st. So I think going out to these places, dragging the press out to them, showing them the Air Force's plans for nuclear war that is as close as we can get to these plans otherwise known as the Single Integrated Operational Plan of the SIOP, you know, parts are disclosed to the public occasionally. That's work that's ongoing. And it's important to show it up in the face as I said of these White House and State Department lectures given to other countries that this wrong, nations shouldn't development nuclear weapons, that you shouldn't threatened other nations with nuclear weapons. How many times have we heard Donald Rumsfeld say this to India and Pakistan to say nothing of Iran and Iraq and we just feel this goes for the goose and well as the gander and that the law is on our side. So if there's something else that we should be doing or something we could have done better maybe it's just work longer hours or something.

EBELING: I hate playing this shoulda, coulda, woulda game out there, but I thought I should ask if you had any thoughts on that.

LAFORGE: Maybe if we had a movie star that would have made a, you know, a Hollywood picture out of some disaster, but then we had *The Day After*, I guess, already and *The China Syndrome*. There have been plenty of interesting documentaries made about the affects of nuclear war even a film about the original Plowshares action and the trial that happened in Pennsylvania. Maybe we just need to keep thinking about creative or innovative ways to get people's attention, that's a little difficult with the way Hollywood and the media are controlled.

[Beginning of side one, tape two]

LAFORGE: I should tell a quick story about your question on success or lack of success because I was in the Ashland County Jail in February, well, the missiles were just being removed from the Grand Forks field in North Dakota and we had already moved away from the area and were living in Wisconsin and focusing our attention on the Trident system. The Trident Nuclear Weapon System which has a transmitter in Wisconsin and I was in jail in Ashland County for a protest there and a reporter got through to me on the phone. No it was summer time, well in any case whatever. I'm on the phone in jail in Ashland and this reporter from Grand Forks is saying, you know, the last missile silo is being destroyed in North Dakota do you folks feel any responsibility for that after all those years of protest there. And it just astounded me, I was flabbergasted that he tracked me down there, and it is a fact that the three fields that have been removed were the sites of, the same sites where most of the protests took place. So we must have educated more than just a group of

people who are participating. Now the, at least the media was paying attention once in a while when we would take these cases to court or drag them out to the silos. So by hook or by crook we managed to bring some of the critical attention to these nuclear weapons through our protests.

EBELING: Where there any or are there any additional programs, I know you guys have put out a bunch Citizen Action Guides, were there any additional programs that came out of your campaign that you think have been effective in fostering the debate and raising the awareness that you were just sort of speaking about on the nuclear issue? Does anything stand out to you?

LAFORGE: A couple of things, the Williams International Corporation near Detroit was making cruise missile motors, well maybe they still are, and something that came out of that area as a result of earlier work on nuclear weapons per se was that a group of lawyers wrote a long legal indictment of that corporation's work on cruise, these were nuclear armed cruise missiles at the time. So this . . . the whole argument of the Nuremberg Law applying in this country to nuclear weapon systems in part grew out of this campaign. In California there was a group called Nuremberg Actions that were focused on the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory where the nuclear warheads are designed or some of them have been and subsequently there was a "Truck Watch" and a "Nukewatch" per se that was launched in Great Britain to bring attention to the transport of missile convoys across Great Britain and that country is so crowded and the roads are so archaic and old that the missile convoys went right through the middle of the tiniest villages mostly at night. So that campaign grew directly out of our's as well and that's still ongoing because the missile convoys are bringing missiles, submarine launch, ballistic missiles to the British Tridents from manufacturing sites in the southeast.

EBELING: I know we've sort of been talking about this all ready here and there throughout our conversation, but I'm wondering if you could describe what you see as sort of the overall impact of your work?

LAFORGE: Fundamentally it's too, we've had a chance to highlight how close in these nuclear weapons systems are to everyday life. It's kind of, like I said earlier, how people cannot be real familiar with the native trees or grasses or even wild flowers in their own area because you're stuck in a rut of your work-a-day life and don't look beyond that, generally, because you're so busy, overwhelmed. And so, for example, the Trident missile system gets direct orders from the extremely low frequency command center in Plane Lake, Wisconsin. We've focused about ten years of energy on that system not just the fact that it helps direct Trident and fast attack submarines but that operation of the transmitter might be causing cancer right in Wisconsin because of extreme low frequency electromagnetic radiation. The other impact, I think, as I mentioned too, to bring this legal argument to bear which is something that resonates with people everywhere since we're supposedly a nation based on laws. And so if

we can bring this argument to bear, usually in court, that nuclear weapons are contrabanded, they have no legal right to exist then in fact you can do damage to them without being punished just like if you find some cocaine in someone's possession or in a subway toilet you can throw it away and you're not going to be prosecuted for destruction of property. The legal argument has taken hold all over the world. There have been a string of acquittals in Great Britain for disarmament actions there against not just the Trident submarine system but against even the sale of fighter jets to Indonesia. Four women about seven years ago did damage to the fighter jet and were acquitted by a jury after it was explained to them what these bomber jets were going to be doing in Indonesia, especially against East Timorese. Most recently the Trident Plowshares 2000 campaign in Great Britain and Scotland has won a whole string of acquittals for protestors who have gone onto the submarines there either spray painted them or hammered on parts of them to do symbolic damage to these giant subs. You know, these subs are two football fields long, seven stories high. And in Germany as well there have been a series of acquittals for demonstrations against U.S. nuclear weapons deployed on German soil and likewise in Belgium at the Klein Brogel U.S. Air Force Base there. So we take encouragement from the fact that international court of justice the World Court at the U.N. wrote an advisory opinion in 1996 that found that nuclear weapons designed to strike first or knockout other nuclear weapons systems before they're launched are illegal per se. And that decision has been used by activists like us in courts all over the world to defend against charges of damage or trespass. Since most of the nuclear weapons focused on these days by us are these first strike aggressive Pearl Harbor attack kind of nuclear weapons bolt out of the blue kind of attacks designed to destroy opponents military hardware before it's used. That the World Court found these weapons illegal actually bodes pretty well for the future of nuclear disarmament and for our cases at trial. So we've got some good court precedence, we've got good decisions from a few higher level court systems and we've got a worldwide anti-nuclear campaign that kind of invigorated since these U.N. inspections have gotten underway. And people all over the nuclearized world are taking hold of these citizens inspection teams and demanding that that supposedly legitimate nuclear weapons states be treated to the same sort of inspections and disarmament regimes as the ones that are condemned by the Security Council.

EBELING: What's Nukewatch's involvement in that campaign? Are you advocating that the United States submit itself to inspections as well as, I mean, is that something that you guys are working on?

LAFORGE: Oh, sure. Yeah, well, in a mock sort of way because you can't take the proposal to seriously since you know that the U.S. is sort of wagging the U.N. around like a tail right now, but we've joined with our friends in the Netherlands and Belgium and done our own citizens inspections of weapons systems found both in the U.S. and in Europe. And it's a way to highlight the

hypocrisy of these first world nuclear arm states as well as a way to bring attention to the deployment of the weapons all over the place. We did an inspection of the Elf site a couple of years ago with little lab coats and hard hats on.

EBELING: That's great.

LAFORGE: It's good theater.

EBELING: I think we've kind of been bleeding into the next question, no pun intended, I was going to ask you what you thought the future held for your movement and where you say yourselves today, we talked about today a little bit, but do you have any plans for the future or any thoughts on where the organization may go?

LAFORGE: Well the Department of Energy which is in charge of development and maintenance of the nuclear arsenal has slowly come to an appreciation of how much radioactive pollution it's produced and has published huge volumes of material on how to deal with high level and low level radioactive waste that's resulted. That has become more and more or it has taken up more and more of our time over the last ten years. Nuclear weapons are about half our staff time and nuclear waste is the other half and they go hand in hand now because of the, well what you can describe as a plague of cancer that's affecting the people not just in the northern hemisphere but primarily in the northern hemisphere. So I think our work is going to be focused on trying to draw connections between the cancer epidemic and nuclear waste radioactive pollution, especially as it's been foisted on us as a result of nuclear weapons production. And as long as the government continues to argue that nuclear weapons are useful that they would like to develop a new one that can burrow underground. You maybe have heard of the robust nuclear penetrator that they're talking about developing in Oak Ridge, Tennessee that will go into the ground fifty feet before it goes off. They're actually making these weapons now in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. It's sort of a mandate to us to keep the focus on their discussion of new nuclear weapons and to just publicize the fact that it really isn't over that the administration in power now is talking just as if the Cold War was still raging and as if nuclear weapons are usable in some sort of limited fashion as if we never learned anything from the 1980's and all the books that were written on the subject or as if the World Court never wrote an opinion about these first strike weapons. So we are developing a map now of, an updated map that will be a supplement to the books since three other fields are gone now and the book doesn't include the Trident submarine system which is where most of the nuclear warheads are now. So we're producing a new map that'll be a map of all the nuclear reactors in the country, about 103 different reactor sites, as well as the nuclear weapons deployment sites. And on top of that we're going to include a map of the major nuclear waste and the nuclear radiation contaminated sites in the country. Some of these maps

have been produced so it'll be a compilation of other people's work, but we're going to bring it all together in one place.

EBELING: So is it going to be another volume to *Nuclear Heartland* or is it going to be an entirely new book?

LAFORGE: Yeah, it's going to be a new project, yes.

EBELING: Okay. What would you like to see, what would Nukewatch like to see come out of the establishment of the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site?

LAFORGE: Well I can think of a couple of things. One in particular is a reminder to people that this isn't a historical phenomenon that the missile system is still up and running. There are 550 missiles still in the ground, still on alert status, still threatening to annihilate whole populations, but these are city busters is what is being placed on the Minuteman missiles now. The single warhead Minutemans are going to have a warhead on them that is 300 kilotons which is, you know, for reference to be compared to the 12.5 kiloton Hiroshima bomb that's something like twenty times the power of the Hiroshima bomb and there are still going to be five hundred of them out there. So the idea of this thing being a historical look at the past needs to be corrected at this museum to remind people that this is still a ongoing thing. Secondly, I hope there'll be kind of a somber tone to this memorial something that isn't triumphal as far as the Air Force goes, you know, they're proud and they're happy to claim that they won the Cold War which to my mind isn't just a mistake it's an outright lie because nobody won the Cold War. If the Russians lost it, well so did we because we have something on the realm of 300,000 cubic meters of high level radioactive waste and nothing to do with it except spread cancer and leukemia to future generations for the rest of time. This is called losing the Cold War and so I would hope that there'd be some segment of this museum that would reflect, you know, embarrassment, shame, outrage, you know, the protest against these weapons that is still going on today. And that needs to succeed in bringing about complete elimination of these devices.

EBELING: Is there anything else you want to add?

LAFORGE: Well I was . . . just that I need to get to you, I'll just make these notes to myself about Jay Davis and Carl Kabat. You should probably talk to Bonnie Urfer too, my co-director because she was closely involved in the earlier stages. And even if you can't do a full blown interview with any of these people, it would be good to talk over the phone with those.

EBELING: Yes. Well, I guess that concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your time.

LAFORGE: Oh, you're welcome.

[End of tape two, side one]
[End of interview]